DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 101 300 CS 001 591

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TITLE An Analysis of Certain Interactions Obtaining among Intermediate Grade Students with Respect to Specified Psychological Constructs and Reading Comprehension Response.
PUB DATE Apr 74
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, April 15-19, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Grade 4; Intermediate Grades; Reading; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Interests; *Reading Research; *Recreational Reading; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between a reader's attitude toward his instructional climate and his diversity of reading interests. The sample for the study consisted of three classes of fourth grade students chosen from a randomly selected elementary school in Greenwich, Connecticut. All subjects were administered (1) the Affective Reading Index to determine their attitudes toward the instructional climate and (2) the Wide Range Reading Interest Inventory to determine the scope and diversity of their reading interests on two different days. The interest inventory items were grouped using factor analysis according to primary interest reflected and then matched to original short stories reflecting their respective interests. As a result, twelve interest subsections were identified: science fiction, romance, travel, politics, human relations, adventure, mystery, economics, sports, animals, mythology, and biography. It was found that the student who indicated positive attitudes toward his instructional climate showed little interest in a variety of reading interest areas and that the student with a negative attitude regarding his instructional climate indicated varying positive degrees of interest in the twelve reading areas. (WR)

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AN ANALYSIS OF CERTAIN INTERACTIONS OBTAINING AMONG INTERMEDIATE GRADE STUDENTS WITH RESPECT TO SPECIFIED PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTS AND READING COMPREHENSION RESPONSE

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Introduction

It is well known that contemporary educators are placing greater emphasis on the affective element of the instructional process. Works by Broudy[1], Bruner[2], and others highlight the increasing significance being accorded the affective realm.

Recent study results obtained by experimental psychologists indicate that individuals perceive the external world, including reading materials, in terms of their respective needs, both the satisfied and unsatisfied ones. Concepts developed by Bandura and Walter[3], Piaget[4], and others demonstrate that when an individual perceives a person or object which he believes is necessary to consummate a need, it becomes enlarged, in many instances, to such an extent that entire portions of the psyche or external environment are obliterated.

This renewed interest in the affective domain has not been the sole province of experimental psychology or educational philosophy. Many prominent scholars in the reading field, including such experts as Russell[5], McKillop[6], and Dechant[7] aver that the reading act is significantly influenced by the attitudes and interests of the reader. Knowledgeable reading researchers such as Dechant[8], Hellman[9], and Smith[10] deem that attitudes and interests make a significant impact on the reading act because they are grounded in the interaction of basic and acquired needs and the means utilized to satisfy them. They insist that their research indicates that these emotionally based factors largely determine both what is voluntarily read and its interpretation.

None of these or related studies has discussed in any detail, however, the relationship between the reader's attitude toward his reading instructional climate (as determined by such variables as his affect toward the teacher,

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his peers and his reading materials) and the diversity and scope of his reading interests. This has been particularly the case for pupils in grade four.

The Problem: Its Significance and Statement

The preceding summary of findings raises a major question: what is the relationship between the reader's attitude toward his instructional climate and his diversity of reading interests?

Perusal of the literature indicates some rather general relationships have been found between the affective domain as manifested through the attitudinal construct and the reading act. None, however, has examined the reader in grade four with regard to the manner in which his attitude toward the reading instructional context is related to his reading interests.

This lack is of particular significance at the fourth grade level inasmuch as it is during that time when the pupil must become an increasingly independent reader. In order to facilitate this reading independence through broadened reading interests, teachers need to enhance their understanding of the relationship between instructional contextual attitude and diversity and scope of reading interests.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested was that there would be zero correlation between the fourth grade reader's attitude toward the instructional climate and the diversity and scope of his reading interests.

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Definition of Terms

The researchers submit that the following definitions of relevant terms are consistent with conventional usage and are incorporated for this reason so as to make the results of this study generalizable, i.e. coherent with existing science.

Instructional Climate: This term refers to the social, academic environment of the classroom as it impinges on the reader. As such, it includes the reader's affective relationship with his reading teacher, reading classmates, and reading materials in that academic setting where reading instruction takes place.

Attitude: This construct is defined as a relatively stable tendency to respond in a favorable or unfavorable fashion to specific psychological objects. It is an object-centered latent variable whose present status may be inferred from written responses expressing affect towards that object.

Interests: This construct is defined in the same fashion as that of "attitude" with the exception that "interest" does not necessarily imply a readily determinable affective direction.

Population, Instrumentation and Procedures

The population for the study consisted of three classes of fourth grade students chosen from a randomly selected elementary school in Greenwich, Connecticut. The seventy-nine pupils retained for the investigation were each administered the Affective Reading index to determine their attitude toward the instructional climate and the Wide Range Reading Interest Inventory

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to determine the scope and diversity of their reading interests on two different days.

The sample studied may be regarded as a representative sample of fourth grade populations since results of normality tests indicate that the children in the sample fell across the entire range of intelligence levels, ages, sex, socio-economic levels, reading achievement levels, attitude towards instructional climate, and reading interests. Therefore, generalizations to real populations are appropriate.

The Affective Reading Index and the Wide Range Reading Interest Inventory were constructed according to procedures recommended by Thurstone and Chave. The source items for these instruments were derived from over two thousand (2000) opinions solicited from fourth grade children by means of questionnaires. In selecting items for the instruments, twenty-one judges sorted over fourteen hundred (1400) opinions reflecting first, attitude towards the instructional context, and second, diversity of reading interests, into seven categories, each spaced along a continum of favorableness. This permitted a rank ordering over the entire continum of each attitude and interest according to an equal in-appearance graduation of items. Validity for the index and inventory was based and verified through principal components analysis and logic. The reliability coefficients of these instruments, as determined by the Kuder-Richardson Formula 21, were .86 for the index and a mean of .83 for the twelve interest sub-sections.

Once the interest inventory items were selected, they were grouped using procedures of factor analysis according to primary interest reflected and then matched to original short stories reflecting their respective

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interests. As a result, twelve interest sub-sections emerged with each reflecting a specific interest area. There were (1) science fiction, (2) romance, (3) travel, (4) politics, (5) human relations, (6) adventure, (7) mystery, (8) economics, (9) sports, (10) animals, (11) mythology, (12) biography.

Over a two-day period, each of the seventy-nine students comprising the sample were given the two instruments. Testing was done at mid-year in order to insure that the students had developed a set toward the instructional climate.

Analysis of Data

Results indicate that the hypothesis cannot be accepted. As shown in Table 1, the results do not demonstrate any zero correlations between the fourth grader's attitude toward his instructional climate and each of the twelve reading interest areas measured.

Table 1. Correlations among 79 fourth graders' Affective Reading Index (ARI) scores and Wide Range Reading Interest Inventory scores.

Relationship	Coefficient
ARI versus science fiction	= -.2801 *
ARI versus romance	= -.3414 *
ARI versus travel	= -.3564 *
ARI versus politics	= -.3779 *
ARI versus human relations	= -.3901 *
ARI versus adventure	= -.4628 *
ARI versus mystery	= -.3499 *
ARI versus economics	= -.4969 *
ARI versus sports	= -.3970 *
ARI versus animals	= -.4087 *
ARI versus mythology	= -.4664 *
ARI versus biography	= -.4686 *

* = $p < .01$

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Results revealed that the pupil who indicated positive attitudes toward his instructional climate showed little interest in a variety of reading interest areas, and conversely, that the student with a negative attitude regarding his instructional climate indicated varying positive degrees of interest in the twelve reading areas appraised. In this regard, the most strongly exhibited interests were those involving feelings toward biography, economics, and adventure, with science fiction appearing as a more neutral reading interest area. Therefore, it was concluded that no significant consociation appeared between the fourth grader's reading interests and his attitude towards the setting in which the basic reading skills are usually taught.

Discussion

The findings of this study serve to highlight two educational realms: the educational setting and certain characteristics of the fourth grade students. The findings indicating negative correlation between a random sample of fourth grade students' attitude toward instructional climate and their variety of reading interests is of particular significance inasmuch as grade four is considered to be the first grade division where pupils are expected to have acquired independence insofar as basic perceptual reading skill is concerned. Furthermore, it is widely held in reading education that the educational product should consist of a highly proficient individual with many diverse reading interests.

Therefore, the following heuristic observations were generated from the study's results. Previous research findings that reading interests

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of youngsters appears to be related to the educational goal of developing proficient readers and that diversity of pupil reading interest seems to be correlated with their development into proficient readers is refuted by the results of this investigation. It was concluded that those pupils who indicated dislike for their instructional climate and thus exhibited more divergent behavior patterns received more teacher guidance and as a result were indirectly encouraged to manifest a greater diversification of reading interests. The inverse appears to be indicated for those who favorably viewed their instructional climate.

Implications For Further Research

As is characteristic of empirical research, this study raises as many questions as it answers. Insofar as instructional setting is concerned, this study concentrated on students functioning in a number of instructional and organizational constructs. Another approach could consist of testing the hypothesis by controlling the administrative and instructional context so as to compare scholastic attitude and diversity of reading interests across open, traditional, self-contained, departmentalized, and other organizational models. Results from a study of this nature could provide valuable information to educators with respect to the extent which particular organizational patterns affect diversity and scope of reading interest in young people. Other questions as yet unanswered are of a more humanistic nature. For example, do youngsters of high, average, and low intelligence respond differentially to the relationships investigated in this study? Research findings here can suggest ways methodology and approach can most

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advantageously promote reading interests.

The relationships involved in the questions raised above require resolution before definitive steps can be taken to broaden the narrow choices in reading that many students are making at a critical stage in their reading development, that is, the fourth grade level.

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